

Seasonal Splendor on Third Street South

Alanna Jaron, 16, creates holiday window design

by Karen Hanlon



As downtown Naples transforms into a winter wonderland amid sunshine and palm trees, wreaths, poinsettias and Santa Claus appear on Third Street South. Reindeers are at the ready and toy soldiers stand guard on every corner.

This is the season when retailers, who rely on the holiday revenue boost, prepare eye-catching window displays to entice revelers into their shops.

Beneath the striped awnings of Third Street South's Sara Campbell boutique, local artist Alanna Jewel Jaron, 16, studies a row of tall windows. With confident strokes of a liquid chalk pen, the Naples High School junior fills the glass canvas with birch trees and wintry white swirls that give the impression of new-fallen snow.

As the frosty scene emerges, the artist steps back to observe her work.

"It needs dimension," Alanna says, as she adds layers of crisp, sparkly snowflakes over the stark branches, like the Sugar Plum Fairy sprinkling fairy dust across an enchanted forest.

"This year, more than ever, we need to offer a little more sparkle and joy to people's lives," says Liz Mossman, Sara Campbell's regional manager for its Florida stores, as she arranges rows of twinkling icicle lights inside the window. Mossman says she partnered with Alanna to work with "the most creative person I know."

Making Her Mark

Alanna has been part of the Naples art scene and beyond since she captured a People's Choice award in a 5th Avenue chalk art contest when she was in 8th grade. She's added painting, photography and sewing to her creative repertoire. She also designs and models upcycled couture and original wearable art for various fashion shows.

Her confidence and conviction soared when, at the age of 15, she was accepted as a juried artist at Art Wynwood, a contemporary and modern art fair held in Miami, a city she finds inspiring for its vibrancy and color.

With many of her artistic outlets temporarily shut down due to the pandemic, Alanna says designing and painting the window display provides a creative opportunity. Before she finishes the first pane, a crowd gathers and asks to take photos.

"This is my favorite part," she says, "to interact with people who are watching."

Paths of Creativity

For as long as she can remember, Alanna's world included art. But it wasn't until she nearly failed her middle school physical education class that she discovered she had genuine talent and passion for creating.

After a PE teacher's phone call that described skipped track practices and apparent sluggishness, Alanna was diagnosed with Hashimoto's disease, a thyroid condition marked by fatigue. With treatment, Alanna found the energy, buoyancy and stamina to express herself in imaginative ways.

Her first painting to garner attention was a Frida Kahlo portrait in an Artis—Naples show featuring Collier County students.

"People liked the colors and the stuff happening in it," Alanna says. The positive reaction emboldened and encouraged her artistry. In addition to painting, she signed up for classes in digital drawing and sculpture.

"A lot of my inspiration comes from my travel and getting out of the normal situation," she says.

Out of the Box

Twice exposed to the COVID-19 virus and isolating with her parents and twin brother has had its benefits. Alanna transformed quarantine into mini-workshops, generating items for her sustainable clothing line.

She partnered with online influencers and saw an uptick in custom orders, including jeans she assembled from dozens of recycled denim squares from thrift-store fabric finds. Another favorite is a bustier and skirt constructed from a men's button-down shirt. Instagram has been one tool to her success, increasing sales and commissions from Michigan, Arizona and California.

Her mother, jewelry designer Amanda Jaron, encourages innovation and originality.

"She's high energy and always creating," Alanna says of her mother. "It's a good environment for art."

Just a year and a half from graduation, Alanna dreams of studying at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and one day living in one or more of the European pillars of the fashion industry: Paris, Milan or London.

Seizing the Season

Mossman expects Alanna to accomplish every one of her goals. But she is happy to have her in Naples a little longer.

"Alanna is an asset to our community," Mossman says as she selects cashmere wraps for three window mannequins. "She's an inspiration to other young women to follow their dreams."

After Alanna completes the windowpane creation — life-sized snow angel wings begging for selfies — she moves inside to help Mossman dress the center mannequin in a fir tree skirt of Christmas garland and chicken wire.

Before she leaves, Alanna itemizes supplies she'll need to fine-tune her work, something that includes more snowflakes.

"I'm always competing with myself, always challenging myself, always trying to better myself to see what is working and what is not working," she says.

It appears the winter scene needs little tweaking. The angel wings are barely dry before they attract passersby from the farmers market and the Camber Park art show, who stop, admire and pose for photos between angel wings that hail a happier holiday season for all.

Karen Hanlon, a freelance feature writer, lives in Naples with her husband and three children, and raises awareness and support for charities through service on fundraising boards.